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# days that i wonder where i've been

by unfinishe (splashingfish)

## Summary

Robin has dreams that don't make sense, Chrom has problems expressing his feelings. Or, the one they're both overgrown babies with issues to work out.

## Notes

A couple quick warnings: there are two explicit sex scenes but you'll probably see them coming, and a potentially bloody description in Robin's second dream sequence. These can all probably be skipped if they're not something you're interested in.

There are a couple loose ends in this fic that I didn't get to tie up, so there may be more in this verse in the future, though no guarantees. Most of this was written while listening to Taylor Swift and sad Chromu mixes (these two in particular), hopefully that didn't shine through too much. Title from "Ever After" by Marianas Trench.

There's also a bit of dialogue lifted from certain support logs, if you can catch them.

(For Koko, mostly)

Sometimes when he dreams, he catches snippets – little flashes of other worlds and other choices and other people. In the beginning, he wakes wondering if these are fragments of his memories or glimpses of the future (he thinks he dreamt of Cynthia once, long before Lucina's truth was

spilled, but she had deep blue hair, and it left a bad taste in his mouth), but no answer comes to him. Miriel gives him concoctions to ease his sleep, and Sumia reads his fortune in the flowers she picks during their travels, but neither helps much.

Sometimes these flashes are horrifying. He sees a world ravaged by Grima, verdant forests turned to ash and dust, the streets of Ylisstol soaked with blood. Others are… surprisingly domestic. Once he dreams of Nowi and her daughter flying the skies together, twisting with unbelievable agility through the air. Another time he sees Stahl haul a young boy into the saddle behind him – he lashes the reins and the boy lets out a whoop as the horse springs into a gallop.

It's hard to tell whether the good outweighs the bad. It's like Emmeryn's death, which he has played out in his mind a thousand times. Some days he thanks her for her sacrifice, for saving the people from more needless bloodshed, for saving Chrom from having to make the choice. Other days he shoves the chess board off his desk and paces the length of the study, curses himself for still not having found another way.

Much the same way, he stares out the window and wonders if these snapshots are worth anything – if the brief glimpses of a child's happiness are worth the destruction that comes after. He dreams of a young Severa screaming at her mother over Chrom, telling her to give up, to move on, and the next day they receive word of a hold in the south. When they arrive, a girl in twin ponytails twists her mouth into a scowl at the sight of them, and Robin feels his stomach sink.

And yet, he thinks, in the aftermath, he never dreams of Morgan.

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"Wouldn't it make more sense to position them here?" his daughter asks him one day, nudging a rook to another square across the board. She peers up at him through long lashes, the picture of innocence, and for a moment he sees her face twisted with the same agony as Lucina's. (He prays every night that she won't have the same dreams he does.)

"Father?" she questions, and he jolts back to himself.

"Sorry," he murmurs, and quickly surveys the board to correct her. "Well, you'd think it would make sense, but it leaves the cavalry open to a flanking attack. You can't defend as well from the saddle, and all it takes is a solid hit to one of the horses back legs to render a horseman useless."

Morgan makes a frustrated sound and pushes the piece back to the spot in which he'd originally placed it. "It's not as if their own defenses are particularly strong, though," she protests. "Seems to me it'd be better to split those with heavier armor along the rear to protect both the cavalry and the mages."

He shakes his head. "It's easier to strike an enemy from behind with a spell than it is with a spear, not to mention you can turn quicker. Besides, the point isn't to defend from behind. You want to be ready in case of a flank attack, but your main objective is still ahead of you. If you leave the heavier knights in the back, they'll fall behind quicker and never make it to the enemy's main force, which pretty much renders them useless."

Morgan huffs another sigh and drops her elbows to the desk, planting her head in her palm. "So I'm wrong again."

He gently reaches out to ruffle her hair, smiling. "You're just getting caught up in the details again, losing sight of the big picture. You're still learning," he reminds her when she rolls her eyes. "That's why I'm here."

She glances up at him and smiles back, even if she does still look a little frustrated, a little put out.

“Thank you, Father,” she murmurs.

On impulse, he drops a kiss on her head. He doesn’t know why – it just seems like the right thing to do. He thinks he’s seen Chrom do the same with Lucina before.

It must be the right thing to do, because Morgan’s hand moves abruptly to cover what he’s sure is a smile.

“So where *do* you put the heavy knights, if the mages are here?”

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If his dreams prove anything, it’s that Robin’s daughter is as much of an enigma as he is himself. He doesn’t know what it means – her missing memories, his missing memories, her lack of appearances in his dreams – but if it results in her being spared the future that Lucina has seen, then he thinks he can live with it.

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“Robin.”

He startles at the sound, turns away from his attempts to start a fire to see Frederick standing with a load of wood under one arm.

“Oh, thank Naga,” Robin breathes. “Maybe you can get this started, since it won’t do a thing for me.” He shoves the flint into Frederick’s hands once the other man has dropped his armful of firewood.

“Delighted as I am that you’ve found a use for me,” Frederick says wryly, “my real reason for coming was that milord has requested your presence.”

Robin feels his stomach twist. “Is he okay?”

“Not so badly injured as we thought,” Frederick assures him. He kneels by the fire and strikes it alive with only a single try. Robin frowns and wonders if he shouldn’t have just used the tome instead.

“Is he still in the medical tent?”

“Maribelle has deemed him well enough to retreat for food and rest in his own tent,” Frederick says. “Though I believe that is precisely what he wishes to speak with you about.”

Whatever that means, Robin thinks, but he thanks Frederick for the message and sets out across camp.

He finds the not-exactly-an-exalt resting among a half-assembled tent, leaning back against one of the few poles he’s staked in the ground and rubbing his injured knee. Robin catches him wince, but his face brightens suddenly when he catches sight of the approaching tactician.

“There you are,” he says, hobbling to his feet. “Here, come help me set up our tent.”

“Should you be walking on that?” Robin asks warily as he approaches, and then Chrom’s words register in his mind. “Wait— *our* tent?”

Chrom’s face darkens. “It would seem we lost more supplies to that fire than we thought. Three tents burned in the process, which means more people will have to share than usual. I thought it best we carry at least some of the burden.” His face flickers with concern for a moment. “That is, uh… If that’s all right with you.”

Robin smiles fondly at him and shakes his head. “You needn’t have asked,” he says. “One night sharing a tent won’t kill either of us.”

“Ah, well, that’s the thing.” Chrom rubs at the back of his head. “We lost several bedrolls as well. So, uh. We won’t just be sharing a tent.”

Robin wonders idly if Chrom knows how well the pink in his face just now complements the blue of his hair. “It’s not an issue,” he says. “As I said, I think we’ll both live. Maybe those blankets won’t seem so thin if we’re sharing body heat.”

“Mm, indeed,” Chrom mumbles, and Robin rolls his eyes.

“Is the great Prince Chrom scared of sharing his bed for a night?” he teases gently, moving to help stake the poles.

Chrom flushes redder. “One would think you would try to phrase it differently,” he suggests, busying his hands with the tent itself in an obvious attempt to avoid having to engage Robin directly.

Robin grins. “Is that a yes?”

Chrom looks up with an expression that begs, *Please don’t stir up any more rumors than there already are* , and Robin takes pity on him, laughing.

“All right, all right,” he jokes, “I’ll leave you your virginity for another night longer.”

The exalt splutters indignantly, dropping the tent. “Robin!”

“Though if you’re to believe the rumors, such wanton displays of affection have already passed between us,” Robin sighs dramatically. “I do wish I’d been there to see them.”

“All right, I think you’ve embarrassed me enough for one night,” Chrom decides. He picks the tent back up and starts to drape it over Robin’s poles. “Take pity on your poor, injured friend and help me pitch the tent, please?”

Robin laughs. “As you wish, milord,” he says, and, well. If ever Ylisstol held a competition for best looking tomato, Chrom would certainly win.

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The dreams don’t come when he sleeps with others nearby. Maybe it’s the safety found in numbers, the ease of sleep that comes from knowing someone else will be there to watch your back. Or maybe, he thinks on the days when the people, when the *Shepherds* look at him and wonder to each other if Prince Chrom really did the right thing – maybe it’s the opposite. Maybe having people around puts him on edge just enough that he can’t fall deeply enough into sleep for the dreams to plague him.

And so when he crawls into their shared bedroll after checking to make sure Morgan has food in her belly and a tent to sleep under, he doesn’t worry that the dreams will come.

“Everyone all right?” Chrom murmurs. He’s turned on his side, away from Robin, but their backs are pressed together, a line of warmth down Robin’s spine.

“Mmm,” Robin hums an answer. “Everyone’s fed, clothed, and housed for the night. The girls have taken a tent for themselves, it appears. Inigo seemed a bit put out that he wasn’t invited, but Olivia invited him to share with her, so I think it’ll all work out.”

“Good,” Chrom mumbles. His voice is hazy with near sleep and the barest edge of that kind of exhaustion that comes only from injury. “Frederick said he told her to talk to him.”

“It’s about time,” Robin agrees. He shifts slightly, feels Chrom’s foot brush his calf and tries not to blush at the intimacy of it. He reminds himself that *Chrom* is the one who blushes in the face of the rumors about them, not him. After all, Chrom’s the one with the reputation to uphold – his status, his position, his nearly anonymous village wife. Robin has none of that to worry about.

“What about you?” Chrom asks, and Robin knows better than to shoot back a *‘What about me?’*

“Fed, clothed, and housed, as well,” he says, and can practically hear Chrom roll his eyes.

“You took quite a tumble in that battle,” the exalt reminds him. Robin feels Chrom’s shoulders shift against his back, twitching just ever so slightly. “Are you all right? Did you see Lissa, at least?”

“I’m fine,” he promises. “Just a few scrapes. I’ve had worse.” He pauses, then, “And you, milord?”

“Stop calling me that,” Chrom groans. “Didn’t I tell you enough with the embarrassment?”

“Ah, of course, milord, how could I forget. An order from the exalt is not to be trifled with.”

“Robin,” Chrom whines, and Robin laughs so softly that he doesn’t think Chrom would even know he *was* laughing if not for the shaking of his shoulders.

“I’m sorry,” he says playfully, and twists slightly to glance over his shoulder, pressing just that bit more firmly into Chrom’s back. “I’ll stop, I promise.”

“Mm, you’ll stop until you find another chance to make fun of me,” Chrom grumbles. Robin laughs again and turns back to rest fully on his side.

“Goodnight, Chrom,” he murmurs, a smile still on his face.

"Mm, ‘night, Robin,” Chrom mumbles back, and Robin closes his eyes.

He’s wrong.

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Gerome and Minerva stand close together on a cliff, overlooking what is left of the children’s last hold. From here they can see everything – the smoke, the leaf-bare trees, the bodies left to rot, to be taken by the risen to do… whatever they do with them.

The image twists, and Kjelle falls from the saddle for the hundredth time, gives up, storms away with a shout leaving Sully standing behind her yelling furiously after her. Next is Lucina, taking up Falchion in her hands with an expression that mixes fear and sorrow and hope all together in one – it lingers on her face, and then she is gone and replaced with Panne’s final moments, panting in her beast form, blood staining her fur. Yarne whines over her, keening lowly and trying to nudge her to stand.

*My son* , she conveys in the language of their kind, and Yarne whines louder – and then she is gone.

And Robin jolts upward, panting in time with the echo of Panne’s breath in his mind, eyes wide and choking. Sweat sticks his hair to his forehead and he drops back down to let his head fall on the pillow, closing his eyes and letting himself breathe. *Just a dream.*

“Robin!”

Ah. Shit.

He opens his eyes slowly to find Chrom hovering over him, eyes wide with concern. “Milord?” he tries nervously.

Chrom’s face falls into a frown so easily Robin would have thought he’d practiced the transition. “Are you all right?”

“I’m fine,” Robin assures him, giving the exalt a light pat on the chest with the arm closest to him. “Just a bad dream.”

“You’re sure?” Chrom says slowly, and Robin wonders, not for the first time, why it is that the one person he wishes would leave well enough alone is the only one who can see through him.

“Positive,” he sighs. “Let’s just go back to sleep, yeah? Sorry for waking you.”

He shifts slightly so he can try to get back to sleep, but it’s this movement that suddenly makes him very much aware of their position – and judging by the sudden tint to Chrom’s face, he’s noticed, too. Because it’s not just Chrom leaning over him – it’s the easy tangle of Chrom’s knee between Robin’s legs, the arm Robin has tucked up against him, the nearness of their faces. In fact, Robin realizes, and swallows very slowly, their faces are very, *very* close.

“Ah,” he murmurs. Neither of them moves.

He can’t take his eyes off Chrom’s face, so he notices immediately when Chrom’s gaze flicks down, even if it’s only for a split second. He senses rather than sees the start of Chrom’s movement, and fists a hand in the other man’s nightclothes before he has a chance to do anything.

“Don’t,” Robin warns, desperation turning a whisper into a hiss. They can’t. Not with the rumors, not with Chrom’s *wife* , not with his *daughter* , oh gods, Lucina hates him enough already, he can’t wreck her parents’ marriage—

“Robin,” Chrom whispers. Robin’s never seen his eyes so intense outside of battle.

“Please, don’t,” he whispers back.

“Why not?” Chrom asks, and Robin can tell, all it would take is a yes, and everything they’ve built would come shattering down. He can’t let them put a name to it, can’t let them give action to thoughts they’ve kept so tightly under wraps. Rumors are just that – rumors, and as long as there’s nothing to substantiate them, they needn’t worry. But put some truth to the rumor, and suddenly you start playing a very different, very dangerous game.

“Just…” Robin doesn’t know how to tell him. “Chrom. Think about what you’re doing.”

The exalt swallows long and slow and hard, and Robin tries not to think about it, tries not to watch the movement of the muscles in his throat and the way his eyes are still fixed on Robin’s face, tries not to notice the tremble in the hand he has tangled in Chrom’s shirt.

And then Chrom blinks, and the moment breaks. Robin breathes.

The color springs to Chrom’s face faster than Robin could have imagined possible. “I’m so… Oh gods, I’m so sorry, Robin, I don’t know—”

“Just let it go.” Robin untangles his fingers and pats his bedmate on the chest. He gives him the

smile he saves for only two people on this planet, and they carefully wiggle apart. Robin feels cold, after, but he turns onto his right side, towards Chrom's back. He doesn't know when the other falls asleep, but when he does, he dares press his hands to that back, and closes his eyes, and prays.

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He doesn't dream again, that night, but he still wakes in a sweat. Chrom is gone already, probably up early with Frederick, and Robin takes the moment to indulge himself, rolling to the vacated spot and wrapping himself in the blanket. He's not sure how it's supposed to make him feel better, but it does. He doesn't move for a long time.

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It's a three day trek still back to Ylisstol, and not for the first time, Robin envies the riders – Sully and Stahl chatting companionably on the backs of their horses, Sumia and Cordelia and Cherche overhead. Gerome and Cynthia keep to the ground for the sake of the other kids, but Robin catches Nah staring wistfully at the sky more than once, looking like she'd like to join her mother in the clouds. He doesn't blame her.

Just past noon, they run into a horde of risen completely unprepared. Vaike sounds the alarm (which means he starts cursing loudly enough to make Maribelle angrier at him than usual) and they all take to arms in a matter of moments, and then the horde is upon them.

He slashes through three with his sword, spins to knock another one back with a blast of lightning. He can see Morgan back to back with Laurent, both of them with tomes in hand, and he feels a little better – but not by much.

He hates fighting like this, hates being unprepared. He can't keep track of who's still standing when he doesn't know where they were to start with, and how is he supposed to make sure they guard each other's backs if they can't even see through the haze of risen and blood, and—

"Robin!"

The roar startles him from his thoughts and he whirls just in time to see the blow coming. Seeing it does little to soften it, though, and a moment later he finds himself lying in the dirt, head smacking the ground roughly.

For a moment, he sees stars, and the stars look like Yarne trying to force his dying mother back to her feet, and Robin wheezes through what feels like a two-ton brick sitting on his chest, trying to force back the memories or dreams or premonitions, but he feels like he's choking on his own breath.

"Father!" he hears Morgan scream, and he opens his eyes to see the risen bearing down on him with its axe.

He doesn't have time to move. He's going to die here, he thinks, and he keeps his eyes open, ready to meet his fate. Better it end this way, than in the flames and ashes of Lucina's bitter future.

Of course, having his eyes open means he sees the exact moment when Falchion bursts through the risen's chest, as well as when it fades away into dust and Chrom appears on the other side.

"For the love of all that's good in this world," Chrom sighs as he shoves Falchion into the ground, steps forward and holds out a hand, "would you stop taking naps on the ground?"

Robin laughs, even if it comes out as a wheeze, and Chrom cracks a smile in return as he helps him stand. That must have been the last of them, because Robin can almost hear everyone relax around them.

He uses Chrom to steady himself, only to nearly collapse a moment later when something small and powerful barrels into his back. As it is, he ends up colliding with the exalt with the wind knocked out of him once again, with the something small that is his daughter clinging to his waist.

“Father!” she cries into his coat. “Oh, gods, I thought you were gone, I—”

“Morgan,” Chrom cuts in delicately. “If I’m not mistaken, your father can’t breathe, and I can’t very well hold both of you up at the same time.”

“Oh gods!” Morgan jumps away quickly, and Robin squeezes his eyes shut while Chrom holds him upright, long enough for him to catch his breathe again.

“All right, there?” he asks when it passes, and Robin nods slowly. “Can you stand?”

He tries, and nearly falls over again. “Father!” Morgan cries out again.

Chrom grunts as he catches Robin’s fall. “All right then,” he grits out as he forces them both upright again. “Lissa!”

“I’m fine,” Robin wheezes. “Just a little bruised around the ribs is all.”

“Father, you can’t even *stand* ,” Morgan accuses him, and he can’t quite find the breath to argue.

Lissa heals him as best she can, though she warns him to stay off his feet as much as he can, which means that when everyone has been cleared for the journey, he gets hauled into the saddle behind Sully for the remainder of the day.

Further proof, he thinks, that he needs to be more careful with what he wishes for.

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If his mind flashes back to the not-a-kiss, if he thinks of the warmth in Chrom’s eyes as he helped him stand, if the pain in his ribs reminds him of the chokehold he felt last night, well. You can hardly blame him.

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Chrom pitches their tent himself that night, ignoring Robin’s protests that it’s really just a few bruises and he’s had the whole day to recover. Frustrating as it is, it means he actually gets to sit for dinner around the fire with the others, something it feels like he’s been missing for a very long time now.

Morgan clings close to him rather than sit with the other kids like she usually does, but Robin doesn’t mind. Maybe it’s the strain of the day or the exhaustion he still feels leftover from the night before, but her presence is comforting. As she dozes off on his shoulder, he wraps an arm around her and rubs circles into her side with his thumb. This, at least, is untouched by his dreams.

Slowly, everyone drifts back to their tents. Robin stays by the fire, hoping to put off waking Morgan for just that little bit longer. The pop and crackle of the flames even has his own eyes drooping, lower and lower, drifting…

“Robin?”

His eyes snap open and he tries not to jump, well aware of Morgan leaning on his shoulder still. When he looks up, though, it’s a different head of blue hair that’s standing over him.

“Lucina,” he greets her quietly. “What can I do for you?”

She shifts restlessly, her hand wresting on the parallel Falchion's hilt, still hanging at her hip. "I hoped we might speak a moment."

"Ah, is it important?" he asks, a touch nervously. Chrom's daughter was intimidating enough when he didn't know she was *Chrom's daughter* . Now, with the rumors ringing fresh in his mind, it's even harder to face her. "I, uh, don't want to wake her."

"It may be important," Lucina responds cryptically, "depending on your perspective."

He should have known better than to try to reason with someone of Chrom's blood, he thinks wearily. "You're just like your aunt, you know," he says, and though he doesn't clarify which one, he still catches the corner of her eyes tightening ever so slightly in reaction.

Then he sighs and gently wakes Morgan. Once he's sent her off to her tent, he stands (with Lucina's help) and heads in the direction of his own. Lucina follows, and never once does she take her hand from the sword.

He stops several yards from his tent and turns to face her. "So," he says. "What's this about?"

Lucina hesitates a moment, and her grip tightens, and then she relaxes. "Please don't take this the wrong way."

"Oh, that's not ominous…" he says with a small smile. It's supposed to be a joke. Lucina doesn't laugh.

"My father is very important to me," she says, and Robin thinks, with a sinking feeling in his stomach, that he might know where this is going.

"As such," she continues, "I make it my business to know what the people think. *All* the people, including the Shepherds. Which leads me to some, ah, concerning things I may have heard, both around camp and in the city."

"You mean the rumors that I'm sleeping with your father."

Lucina flinches, but Robin can't bring himself to feel bad. Straightforward tends to be the best way to deal with these exalted blood types, he's found.

"Yes," Lucina responds. "I only intended to inform you that such rumors were circulating, but if you already know, then—"

"Lucina," he cuts her off. She looks a bit put off by the interruption, but falls silent.

He sighs, and wonders for the eightieth time today how he's managed to get himself into this mess. "I know how important your father is to you," he says finally. "Today was only the latest in a long series of incidents involving me not paying attention and him saving me from certain death. He's one of the most important people in my life. Morgan may be the only person above him."

He hesitates then, watching Lucina's carefully blank expression. She doesn't even blink. Seriously, what is it with the exalted line?

"That said," he goes on slowly, "your father is a very good friend of mine. But that's all."

Lucina hesitates, studying him for a long moment, but finally she nods. "I understand," she says. She drops her head, chin touching her chest. "I apologize for taking your time."

"Lucina," he calls after her as she starts to head away. She only half turns back, eyes downcast.

“Your father would tell you. If there was someone in his life.”

“There is someone in his life,” Lucina responds. “We left my mother in Ylisstol, did we not?”

Ah. Yes.

He looks away, praying his blush doesn’t touch his cheeks. “I meant…”

“I know what you meant,” Lucina says. Her voice is low, but when he glances back to her, she’s smiling. “I trust you, Robin.”

He wonders how much of that is true, but he doesn’t press.

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That night is different.

He dreams of blood, of gnashing teeth and a deep laughter that echoes through his bones, sends shivers down his spines. Pain rips through him and he chokes on blood that fills up his lungs. His fingers curl into claws, his face stretches, and a roar bursts from his mouth that he didn’t call himself.

The world distorts. With a massive hand (is that what it really is?), he swipes away a dozen approaching enemies. Or he thinks they’re enemies. It’s hazy.

That hand slams down a moment later, landing heavily on his enemy. He feels long lips draw into a sneer as his claws pierce skin and flesh, and he lifts the paw to inspect his victim.

Her face is blank, jaw slack, eyes empty, a book falling from her fingers as he lifts her up. Blood drips from his claws, and he laughs, flings her away and chuckles again when her limp body hits the wall.

There is a scream, and the tiniest part of his mind whispers, *Morgan…*

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The screams, he discovers upon waking, are his own. He tastes salt on his lips, his face feels wet, there are hands on his shoulders. He tries to breathe but his stomach rolls and without thinking he’s on his feet, lurching for the tent flaps and falling to his knees outside where he wretches into the grass.

A warm arm slides around his shoulders while a hand pushes his hair back from his face. He chokes on his own bile and leans into that warmth, desperate for support. After a moment, he collapses backwards, sitting on his feet, and just lets himself sob.

“Shh,” Chrom murmurs, pulling him closer. “It’s all right now, you’re safe. It’s over.”

Oh gods, *Chrom* . Robin is weak, he knows, because he doesn’t push Chrom away, because he’s letting him see this. It doesn’t stop him though, and he stains Chrom’s nightclothes with his tears.

The crying subsides, eventually. Chrom leans back just enough to look at him, but Robin can’t bring himself to meet those eyes.

“Go back inside,” the exalt murmurs. “I’ll get you some water.”

He staggers to his feet, and Chrom helps him inside before disappearing back into the night. His hands tremble as he wraps the blanket around himself, scrubs at his face with his hands. He feels… empty, he decides. Exhausted. There isn’t much left to feel after that sort of episode, he

thinks.

Chrom comes back with two small ceramic cups, and he presses one into Robin's hand, lets him drink it down without saying anything. Robin is grateful for the silence.

When he finishes, Chrom hands him the second cup. Robin doesn't drink it, just sits there, staring into the trembling water.

"Chrom…" he starts.

"You don't have to explain," comes the response.

"No, but…" He rubs at his eyes. "But I should."

Chrom says nothing.

"I've, uh…" He glances up, and Chrom is watching him, legs crossed, hands in his lap. There is no concern, no fear, no frustration in his face – and yet Robin knows he's listening. There's something in the way his eyes rest on him. He looks back down quickly, unable to hold that gaze.

"Um. I've been having these for a while," he says finally.

"I assumed so," Chrom murmurs. "If you don't mind me asking… how long, exactly?"

"Uh. A while." He stares down at the water in his hands again.

"Robin…"

"A long time. Years, I guess. Since before Lucina was born. Uh. *This* world's Lucina, that is."

"Gods, Robin," Chrom breathes. "You never told anyone?"

"I talked to Miriel," he admits. "We tried… several potions. None of them seemed to work, so. I gave up. I thought I could just deal with it, or… I don't know. Maybe they'd go away eventually. Maybe I'd just have to live with it for the rest of my life."

"No one should have to carry that burden alone."

Of course he would say that, Robin thinks wryly. Chrom thinks everyone's problems are his problem – he's seen him stop the Shepherds to search for a little boy's lost dog, seen him trek across villages in the snow to fetch a doctor for sick old women. "It's not a burden so easily shared," he tells him.

"But if I had known—" Chrom starts to argue, but Robin puts up a hand.

"What could you have done?" he asks. "I don't mean that rudely, either, so don't give me that look. Even if you had known, what could you have done that would have changed anything? They won't go away just because they're shared. I tried that." Sumia was a good listener, and she told his fortunes afterwards, braided him crowns with the stems of the flowers, but it didn't make the dreams go away.

"I… Still…" Chrom looks torn, and Robin sighs.

He reaches out, rests a hand on top of Chrom's. "I appreciate the concern, I honestly do, from the bottom of my heart. But this really is something I have to do on my own."

"They're not usually this bad," Chrom guesses.

Robin drops his hand, looks away. “No.”

“What happened? What was different?”

“I…” Robin stalls, not sure how to explain. What is he supposed to tell him? Sometimes I think I see the future? Or *a* future, anyway. One where our children have to take up our roles too young, one where we fail.

“Robin.” Chrom’s the one to reach out this time. His hand is warm and dry, not like Robin’s which are still sweaty from the heat of the dream and the sickness afterwards. “You can trust me.”

“Of course I can,” Robin says, trying not to make it sound like a protest. “It’s just… hard to explain.”

“I’ll listen for as long as it takes.”

Robin tries not to laugh, he really does, but it doesn’t work out very well. Chrom looks offended, and Robin just laughs again. “I’m sorry, you just… That’s a very *you* thing to say.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Chrom grumbles. “Are you going to explain?”

Robin sighs. “I… I dream about the kids. Lucina and the others. Of their future, or… their past, I suppose.”

Chrom stays silent.

Robin turns his hand over so that their palms touch, but he doesn’t move his fingers, though he wants to. “The dreams are… well. Not nice. I’m sure you could tell.” He lets out a long, slow breath. “They’re always different. Usually somebody dies. Sometimes they die *again* , just in a different way. The only thing that never changes is that I don’t dream of Morgan. Ever.”

“Not once?” Chrom’s eyebrows draw down in confusion.

“Well.” He shrugs. “I guess once, now.”

“…oh.”

“Mmm,” Robin agrees. “Tonight. It. Ah. Well.”

“I can go get her for you…”

Robin shakes his head quickly. “No, it’s fine. I… It’s probably better I don’t see her. I know she’s fine. They’re dreams.” Maybe. He doesn’t know anymore. He never really did to begin with. The dreams from the night before – those were different. This dream of Morgan was…

He slides his hand out from under Chrom’s to rub at his temples and tries not to laugh at himself. He has one genuine nightmare and suddenly he starts worrying there’s something wrong with him. “What a life we live,” he says out loud.

“I’m… I don’t follow.”

Robin shakes his head and looks up, gives Chrom a small smile. “Don’t mind it, I’m just thinking out loud.” He takes his hand again, gentle. “Thank you, Chrom.”

“I swore to stay by your side.” Chrom wraps his fingers around Robin’s, and Robin’s eyes flick down to watch. His stomach is doing strange things again – but this time he doesn’t feel the need

to throw up. Yet.

“I know you did,” he says, and his mouth has gone dry.

When he looks up, Chrom is *right there* , inches away, and Robin doesn’t have time to think (or maybe he just *isn’t* thinking at all) and then their lips are pressed together in the softest way possible.

For the briefest moment – just a split second – the tension drains from Robin’s entire body. And then it’s back with a jolt, ten times stronger than before, and he shoves Chrom away in time with the surge of electricity in his stomach.

They stare at each other, eyes wide, and then quickly turn away. “I’m so sorry,” they both say at the same time.

“Gods, Robin, I…” Chrom trails off. Robin can’t look at him, but he’s sure his face is as red as Robin’s is right now. “I don’t… I’m sorry. You were… That was my mistake. I should have… Last night, you told me—”

“It’s fine, Chrom,” Robin cuts in, because he has to stop this wreck of a conversation *now* before it can get any worse. “Just… let it go. It was an accident.”

“Of course,” Chrom agrees, perhaps a fraction of a second too quickly, but Robin is absolutely not going to call him on it.

“We should get some sleep,” he says after a moment of quiet.

“Ah, yes, of course.” Chrom’s repeating himself now, but Robin isn’t going to call him on that either. “Ah, well, that is… Will you be okay?”

Robin doesn’t know how to say that he’s too exhausted to dream anymore tonight, so he just nods instead – and then remembers that they’re avoiding looking at each other, so he clears his throat and says, “Um, yes. I think so.”

But it’s a long time before either of them gets any sleep.

---

He dreams again, but this dream is different, not a nightmare, not a vision – something much more private. He still wakes wishing he hadn’t dreamt it, though, especially with Chrom so near.

---

Lissa wants him off his feet another day, and Sully lends him her horse once more.

“You can ride yourself, right?” she asks, and looks a bit skeptical when he nods yes. “Well, if you’re sure. I’d rather stretch my legs today. Just don’t give him too many snacks.”

Stahl ends up joining her, and Morgan ends up riding with him. She’s a bit unsteady at first, but she gets the hang of it quickly. After last night it’s… nice, he supposes, to have her nearby. If he watches her a little more closely than usual, nobody seems to notice.

“Father,” she says eventually, after a long period of silence. They’ve spent the last several hours discussing strategy, but something tells him this isn’t a continuation of that conversation.

“Something bothering you?” he asks. He doesn’t know where this is going – and he probably won’t like it, either, he suspects.

“I had a dream last night,” she says. Robin goes absolutely still.

Morgan doesn’t seem to notice. Her eyes are fixed on the sky, watching both Minervas stretch their wings. “You were there,” she tells him. “So was someone else. I think I was… younger. I thought… well, I thought the other person might have been my mother. Like maybe it was a memory, but…” She looks away from the sky without turning her head, eyes landing on Robin. “Father, are you… *sure* you don’t know who she is?”

“Morgan.” He tries not to let his voice strain too much. “We’ve had this conversation before.”

“I know,” she says earnestly, turning fully to face him now. Stahl’s horse snorts in response to her wiggling. “But surely you must have *some* idea.”

“It’s not that simple,” he says, shaking his head. “Morgan, if I knew, I would tell you, but I don’t. I can’t *possibly* know.”

“How can love not be simple?” Morgan demands, and Robin wonders if maybe they’ve drastically overestimated her age.

“Morgan, if I knew the answer to that, I would know the answers to every question in the world,” he says dryly.

“But you must at least have *someone* in mind,” she protests.

The only person who comes to mind when he thinks of the activities it would require to bring a daughter into the world is someone he would never dare mention out loud in that context. Especially not to his daughter.

It’s not as if it would work out quite that way anyway, he supposes. He decides to stop that train of thought right now.

“You’re doing it again, losing sight of the big picture,” he says, and smiles when Morgan pouts. “What matters is that you’re here, not how you got here. Don’t trouble yourself with it so much.” He holds out a hand, and she takes it with a quiet, silent smile, but something tells him this isn’t over yet.

---

And speaking of things that aren’t over… Chrom doesn’t make eye contact with him for the rest of the day. Even when they stop to make camp for the night, sitting around the fire with everyone around them chatting happily over Frederick’s stew, Chrom sticks tight to Lucina like a fearful child. Robin supposes he should be grateful for the freedom – instead he just feels frustrated.

Morgan keeps him company, doesn’t seem to notice a thing wrong with the lack of her father’s usual companion, and she drags him to eat with several of the other kids. They all look a bit betrayed at the intrusion, but Robin can’t quite find it in him to tell Morgan no, and so he doesn’t leave even when he knows he probably should.

Afterwards, when Morgan has drifted off in her friends’ footsteps toward the tents, Robin sits alone and studies the sky. Miriel taught him the names of some of the constellations, once, but he doesn’t remember them well enough to say which are which now.

The fire cracks nearby. He hears Vaike laugh quietly over something he’s talking about with Lissa. A light breeze runs through Robin’s hair, and he closes his eyes, breathes in the summer scented air – smoke and something floral tracing his senses.

There are footsteps behind him. Then, “We should talk.”

He opens his eyes and casts his gaze downward. “Are we sharing again?”

“If you’ll have me.”

A stupid question. He stands and brushes off his pants, folds his coat over an arm. “That would be a better place to talk, then.”

Chrom nods, and the two walk in silence to the tent. Even once they’ve reached it, they don’t speak to each other, instead quietly changing into nightclothes with their backs turned to each other. It’s only after, when they’re both seated on top of their blankets, staring into each other’s eyes, that it occurs to Robin what this is.

He swallows. “So.”

But Chrom’s not wasting any time with that. “I’m sorry,” he says, hands folded in his lap. He looks young, Robin thinks – younger than usual, anyway.

He sighs quietly. “No,” he murmurs. “I’m the one who should be apologizing. I should have stopped this when I first suspected it could become a problem.” Chrom flinches – Robin pretends not to notice.

“We can’t let this go on,” he continues. “We both have reputations to worry about – and you’re *married* , for gods’ sake, Chrom. We have more important things to concern ourselves with. Saving the future, for one.”

One of Chrom’s hands comes up to run nervously through his hair. “I… I suppose I can’t argue that.”

Robin frowns at him. “Did you come here intending to argue? I thought we were on the same page here.”

Chrom won’t meet his eyes. “I wonder.”

The frustration bubbles up, boils over, and burns them both. “What the hell is that supposed to mean?”

Chrom still doesn’t look at him, but his voice is strong, determined. “I said I was sorry, and I certainly won’t do it again if you don’t want me to. But I don’t regret it.”

Robin splutters for a moment, like a fish flung out of the water into the hot sun. “What part of ‘you’re married’ don’t you get?”

He flinches again, turns his head even further away. “It’s not that simple.”

“I don’t know how much more simple you can get than that.”

“There’s more to it than you think.”

“What does that *mean* ?”

Chrom gives him a look, desperate, pleading, but Robin’s not about to let this go. They have to *fix* this, once and for all. It cannot be a problem anymore. He can’t have Chrom’s *daughter* coming to him asking if he’s involved with her father. He can’t have normal conversations with his own daughter being interrupted by thoughts of Chrom, spread out in front of him—

He aborts that train of thought before it can go any further. Chrom is still silent.

And that silence continues, drags on and out until Robin almost can't take it anymore and he's about to scream. And then finally Chrom breaks it – or worse, maybe, holds it in his hands, and then shatters it between his fingers like glass, leaving blood to drip down between them.

"Robin," he says, and his voice is as plain and calm as a clear, empty lake, "I love you."

Robin flinches, hard. "Don't say that."

"I'd be lying if I kept it to myself any longer," Chrom says simply.

"Sometimes it's better to lie than tell the truth."

"Even when lying is only hurting all parties involved?"

"Stop it!" Robin spits, angrier than he intended. "You don't know what you're saying."

"I love you," Chrom repeats. "I've loved you since I pulled you onto your feet in that field. There's no one I trust more than you, no one I would feel safer with."

Robin laughs, something deep and dark in his chest that rumbles up before he can stop it. "You're out of your mind. Why can't you see the problem here? Here, I'll repeat it in case you didn't catch it the first time, you're—"

"We're not married."

Robin stutters to a stop. Silence hangs between them for a moment. " *What?* "

"It was a… cover, of a sort." Chrom's face has gone slightly red. "She and I made a mistake. Afterwards, she needed somewhere to go, and I… needed an heir."

Robin can't believe it. "I can't believe it."

"The papers we signed were fake, not that it would have mattered. The pens never even touched the page. Did you really think I would leave my wife to live in the village while I lived in the palace? You only met her maybe three times, you never found that suspicious?"

"You… you said it was her decision." Robin's mind is reeling. Chrom is giving him this information, but Robin doesn't know what to do with it, doesn't know how to respond. It's sitting between them and they're both acknowledging it, but neither is actually handling it.

"It was." Chrom shrugs a little, smiles a little. "She said it would be easier that way, if she had to disappear."

Robin is silent for a moment, trying to figure out what to do with this, but nothing really comes to mind. He waits a few more long seconds, and then says, "I don't know what you want me to do with this."

"Robin." And abruptly, Chrom is reaching across that space that felt like it had widened into a chasm. "I love you. That is the truth, I swear it. You are the wind at my back, and—"

"All right, all right, that's enough!" His face is on fire, he's sure of it. "I think I get the picture!"

"Then let me prove it," Chrom says, and one of his hands comes up to touch Robin's burning face. "Let me give you the one part of me I've never been able to give, as long as you didn't know."

Robin closes his eyes. “Chrom, we can’t.”

Chrom’s hand on his face goes very still. “Why not?”

Robin swallows, opens his eyes slowly and stares into Chrom’s face. “We… This isn’t right. Lucina—”

“Would understand,” Chrom cuts in, his voice sure and strong. “I know my daughter, Robin.”

“I didn’t mean—”

“I know you didn’t,” he laughs quietly. “Lucina wants me to be happy.” His thumb drags slowly over Robin’s cheek. “You make me happy.”

This is all like one of Virion’s sappy romance stories, Robin thinks inanely in the middle of it. It’s not real. It *can’t* be real.

But then again, he thinks, his dreams are never like this.

“Can I kiss you?” Chrom asks quietly. His voice has dropped low, quieter than before. If the conversation before was private, this one is intimate – this isn’t meant for anyone else.

Robin’s own voice is barely audible. “I… I suppose. If it… if it makes you happy.”

“I want it to make you happy, too,” Chrom says in that same low voice. His eyes are deadly serious, fixed on Robin’s face.

Well. It’s altogether possible that he’ll drop dead in the morning, he thinks, and Chrom is *right* here.

“Ah,” he mumbles, trying to put together words. “Then, uh. In that case…” His heart is pounding. “Yes.”

Chrom doesn’t waste time – his lips are on Robin’s soft and gentle and warm, and both his hands are on Robin’s face now, pulling him closer, and Robin’s hands come up to grab Chrom’s shirt, and they’re both there, together, and it’s the most intimate thing Robin has ever experienced.

And then Chrom pulls back, slowly, just enough to press their foreheads together and stare into Robin’s eyes, blue on brown, and they both just sit there and breathe for a moment.

“Can I keep going?” Chrom asks quietly in that same voice as before.

Robin can’t find the words, so he just nods.

And Chrom kisses him again, but rougher this time, a bit more forceful. He wraps an arm around Robin’s back and slowly pushes him back until they’re horizontal, their lips never once coming apart, and then suddenly the pressure is different. Chrom’s hand slides to Robin’s waist, down to his hip, and the other arm curls around Robin’s head on top of the pillow. This time, when he pulls away, his eyes are dark, swirling with something Robin can’t name.

They spend a long time like that, kissing slowly, easily. Chrom slides into Robin’s mouth smoother than water. The hand on Robin’s hip massages gentle circles with a thumb, and it sends electricity shooting through Robin’s stomach and down, down, down.

Chrom pulls back once more, only to press his lips to Robin’s jaw, his throat, his collarbone. That hand has slipped up under Robin’s nightshirt, and he has to fight to keep himself calm as Chrom

slips further down.

After a moment, they pull apart again – but this time Chrom is reaching for Robin's shirt, lifting slowly, and Robin blinks once and then his shirt is gone, Chrom's quickly following it, and Chrom is bent over him again, pressing his lips to Robin's collarbone once more, then his chest, then his stomach, and oh, he spends his time there, breathing softly against Robin's skin, kissing him gently, and every touch jolts through Robin.

Then Chrom's hands sweep inwards from where they've settled on his hips, and for all his effort Robin can't keep in the quiet little groan that escapes him. Chrom laughs quietly and leans up to press a swift kiss to Robin's forehead before pulling away and quickly freeing Robin of his pants and underclothes.

Robin feels (for lack of a better word) completely exposed. He tries not to focus on his own cock lying half-hard in the open for Chrom to see, but it's difficult to ignore, especially with the way Chrom turns his eyes down there. He closes his eyes so he doesn't have to watch.

"Hey." Fingers gently comb through his hair, and lips press against his again. "I won't if you don't want me to."

He breathes hard against Chrom's mouth, just inches away. "It's fine."

"Are you sure?"

He opens his eyes, steels himself, the other night's dream fresh in his mind. He stares intensely into Chrom's eyes, wishing he could tell him everything with just a single look. "I'm sure."

The corner of Chrom's mouth pushes into a small smile, and he presses yet another kiss between them before he straightens up.

The first light touch sends a shiver up Robin's spine, and Chrom laughs quietly again. He drifts his knuckles up the length of it, and Robin coughs roughly in the back of his throat. Finally, Chrom takes him fully in hand and gives him one slow, experimental pump.

Robin's hands fly up to his mouth, trying to hold back the groan. Chrom repeats the movement, slides his thumb over the head. It's such a simple thing, and yet it sets his nerves on fire, pulls at him in all the right ways.

It's not long before his hands are falling away from his mouth, his breath rising in pants. He's fully hard now, and with every stroke Chrom tries something new – pressing down on the slit, rubbing gently just under the ridge, and every time Robin feels like he's about to die.

"Chrom," he chokes out, and Chrom leans over him, the new angle bringing all sorts of new sensations, changing things completely.

"I know," Chrom breathes against his cheek, and his hand speeds up and Robin's breath comes even harder and then he comes for real. Heat flashes in his stomach and he cries out quietly, spills over Chrom's hand, his own stomach and chest.

Afterwards, he breathes hard, trying to return to himself. Chrom kisses his cheek and wipes them both clean with one of the extra blankets. Robin tries not to think about who will be doing laundry before they set off in the morning.

While he's still working to catch his breath, Chrom lies down next to him, on his side, resting an arm over Robin's waist. Robin can feel his eyes on him, but he can't meet them.

“Say something,” Chrom says finally, and Robin forces himself to look up.

“Thank you?” he offers, and Chrom snorts a laugh.

“Not exactly what I had in mind, but if it works for you,” he teases. His face is calm, but the jittery movements of his fingers on Robin’s ribs, rubbing erratic circles into his skin, give him away.

Taken in by some sudden inspiration, Robin lifts a hand to Chrom’s cheek. “I love you,” he says, and Chrom looks so taken aback in that moment that it takes all Robin’s willpower not to laugh.

“Y-you…” Chrom splutters, but he can’t seem to remember where he was going with the statement after that, and falls silent. His eyes flicker across Robin’s face nervously.

“I love you,” Robin repeats. “Someday this war will end. We’ll emerge victorious and bring peace back to the world. And when that happens, we’ll be free to follow our hearts.”

Chrom’s hand stills. “ *Our* hearts?”

Robin spreads his fingers across Chrom’s cheek. “Yes, because I love you, you idiot.”

Chrom’s face goes mushy and sentimental, and Robin has to kiss him before it gets any worse and spreads, so he pulls Chrom’s head down at the same time he’s leaning up and their lips meet gently in the middle.

---

He doesn’t get much sleep that night, but what sleep he does get is peaceful and untroubled for what feels like the first time in years. And Chrom is there, every moment of it, and the one time he starts awake, that comfortable weight at his back grounds him, and he’s sound asleep once again within minutes.

---

Just two more days, Robin tells himself the next morning. Despite the skirmish two days previous, they’re still on track to get home on time. He misses his bed, the rooms he shares with Morgan – he misses *bathing* most of all. He tries his best to clean himself in the river by which they’ve made camp, but it’s hard, and he keeps having to stop and cover his face as he remembers the hands that have trailed over those inches of skin, and the skin his own hands have touched.

For all the words he whispered the night before, Chrom treats him no differently in the light of day. Robin supposes it’s a testament to those words’ truth – if Chrom has truly loved him all this time, there would be no need for change, and certainly not as long as they’re constantly surrounded by people like this.

The day’s walk is easier than usual, maybe because his rest went undisturbed for the first time in longer than he can remember. His ribs fully healed, Lissa has cleared him for walking, and Sully gratefully takes her horse back, setting off at a brisk pace with Stahl right behind her. Robin smiles as he watches them go.

Overhead, a lone bird sweeps through the cloudless sky. The sun warms Robin’s face and arms as he tucks his coat over one arm and walks between Morgan and Chrom, Lucina on her father’s other side. Chrom throws an arm around his shoulders and ducks his head close as they discuss battle plans and no one even begins to suspect the existence of the brief kiss he presses to Robin’s cheek when their daughters aren’t looking.

Robin blushes and pushes him away, but he only laughs, and when Morgan and Lucina look back, carefully suspicious, Chrom laughs louder and says, “Morgan, your father is the most easily embarrassed man I’ve ever met,” and Morgan laughs along with him while Chrom dives into a

story from years ago that Robin's sure none of them really need to hear again, but he doesn't have the heart to stop him.

He catches Lucina slowing, watching her father's back, smiling, though she blushes when she sees him looking. He drops back to walk next to her.

"He's…" She trails off, searching for a word. "Happy, I suppose. Different than he was as I remember him."

Robin glances back over. Chrom is talking with his hands, and Morgan's laughter rings out over them all. "It's just… nice," Lucina says. "Seeing him like this."

"I've never seen him any other way," Robin murmurs. He doesn't like the thought of a world that takes Chrom's laughter from him.

They walk in silence for a few moments, watching Chrom's dramatic retelling, until finally Lucina murmurs, "I am sorry, Robin."

He jolts, looks over at her sharply. As happy as he is, as deep as his contentment runs right now, he can't help but feel that all eyes are on him, waiting for him to slip up and let the whole world know their secret.

"For bringing up what I did," Lucina clarifies, not looking at him. "I know… I know the two of you are friends. Even if it were something else, it would not be my place to ask."

Robin's stomach churns. He doesn't know what to say.

"I trust you with my father," she says, but it sounds like she's trying to convince herself more than she is Robin. "You are his closest friend."

He still doesn't know what to say, and when the silence drags on a little too long, she looks over at him, then blushes. "I apologize. Perhaps this isn't the most casual topic of conversation."

He forces a smile. "Lucina, you don't have to apologize for caring for your father."

"I worry, that's all," she murmurs. "I will protect him, no matter what I have to do. Nothing will stand in my way this time."

"Should it come to that," he says, and he doesn't know where the words come from, "I will stand by your side and we will defend him together."

She smiles. "I'd like that."

---

That night, Robin pulls away mid-kiss and settles his weight over Chrom's hips. The exalt is panting slightly, trying to catch his breath. "What's wrong?" he asks, his hand rising to Robin's cheek.

He turns into Chrom's hand, the warmth comforting. "Are we doing the right thing?"

"What do you mean?"

"Us." He turns his head back to look into Chrom's eyes. "This is hardly the time to be… this."

"Robin, I love you," Chrom says, and Robin huffs.

"That's not a reason, Chrom," he says, frustrated. "Here? Now? We have a war to win, a future to

save… We don't even know how the kids factor into this. I doubt Morgan is just going to pop up out of the ground, and—"

"Robin," Chrom cuts him off. "I love you. What part of that doesn't make sense?"

"How about the part where that explains exactly why we think we're justified in doing this right now?"

Slowly, Chrom sits up. Robin has to scoot back to make it work, but they manage it. Once he's upright, Chrom takes Robin's face in both hands. "I love you," he says for the third time.

Robin opens his mouth to protest, but Chrom cuts him off again. "I love you more than the rest of the world put together, but that doesn't mean I'm going to turn my back on all the rest. We're not giving up on everything we have to do."

Robin doesn't have an answer to that, so he looks down.

Chrom catches his lips in a kiss, just a quick one, and when their lips come away from each other he murmurs, "We can find a balance, Robin. I know we can."

Robin drops his head to Chrom's shoulder. "I love you," he says, his voice raspy.

Chrom's arms come around him, tucking him close to his body. "I love you, too," he says back, and Robin doesn't leave those arms till dawn.

---

Ylisstol appears on the horizon just before noon the next day, and they all breathe a collective sigh of relief at the sight of the castle's spires. It's hard not to break into an outright run, but they're back before dinnertime all the same.

People cheer for them in the streets. Chrom and Robin walk at their head, Frederick and Lissa just behind, the youngest members tucked safely away behind their parents, but the group scatters before they reach the castle. Lissa shouts happily the moment she sets foot inside, and dashes off to her chambers – likely for a bath and a change of clothes. Robin smiles after her and wraps an arm around Morgan's shoulders, then heads for their own rooms.

He falls heavily into the chair behind his desk, lounging backwards, and Morgan hops on top of the desk with a book in her hands while she waits for her bath to be drawn.

"Good to be home, huh, Pops?" she jokes.

He laughs at her. "It'd be better with some tea to rest these creaky joints," he says, adding in a pout for effect.

She giggles and pops off the desk, closing the book with a snap. "I'll get right on it."

He follows her into their little kitchen – or what passes as a kitchen, anyway. She sets the kettle on the stove and smiles at him over her shoulder. He smiles back, and that sense of contentment settles in his stomach again.

He should have known better than to think it would stay.

---

He wakes with the taste of blood on his lips, tangled in the sheets. The bed is cold, and the sweat on his forehead is even colder. He rolls over, expecting warmth, but he doesn't find it. It's only then he remembers that Chrom is halfway across the castle in his own bed, and he curls into the

smallest ball he possibly can and waits for the cold to chase away the dreams.

---

There is a meeting in the morning with a few of Ylisse's noble families that Robin only survives because he has two cups of tea in him by that point. It doesn't stop him from having to stifle yawn after yawn for three hours, though, and he catches more than one frustrated glare directed his way when he fails to immediately answer a question.

By the time the meeting is over, he's ready to drag himself back to bed and sleep for the rest of the day, or at the very least bury himself in books and relax. But as he reaches the door, Chrom's voice calls to him quietly.

"Robin, a word?"

He winces and glances over his shoulder. Chrom is watching him carefully. "Close the door."

Robin sighs, but does as he's told, and afterwards he turns around fully to face him. "Yes, milord?"

Chrom groans, the frustrated superior act dropping away as he leans his weight into the table. "I would think at this point you could drop that."

"I have no idea what you're talking about," Robin says with a smile, and the smile he gets in return makes him feel a little bit better.

"Of course you don't," Chrom sighs. He shakes his head, then casts a frustrated, lazy gaze on Robin. "You didn't sleep last night."

"Oh?" Robin tries to keep his voice level. "Were you there? You should've told me, I'd have made room in my bed."

"Robin," Chrom says with a warning tone. "The nightmares came back, didn't they?"

Robin says nothing.

Chrom looks away, the frustrated expression deepening. "I thought… Those last two nights, you didn't have any, I thought maybe… they had gone away. Why would they come back?"

*I'm surprised you couldn't tell* , Robin thinks, but he doesn't say it. "They've never made any sense to begin with," is what he does say. "I wouldn't expect them to start making sense now."

Chrom studies the floor for a few moments – opens his mouth, closes it, opens again, closes once more.

"If you have something to say, then spit it out," Robin says, trying not to laugh. "Though your impersonation of a fish is impeccable, I must say."

Chrom shoots him a glare. "Never mind," he says. "It was a silly thought anyway."

Robin lets it go. Chrom, apparently, does not.

---

He stays up late that night, hoping to push off sleep for as long as possible. He's promised Morgan a lesson in the morning, but she rarely rises before noon if she doesn't have to, so he's not too worried. That said, he's having trouble keeping his eyes from sliding off the line he's reading, and his mind keeps drifting.

It's past midnight when there comes a gentle knock on the door. He's not even out of his chair when the door opens and Chrom's head pokes in. His eyes go wide when he sees Robin sitting at the desk, eyebrows raised.

"Did you need something?" he asks, keeping his voice low so he won't disturb Morgan, sleeping in the other room.

"Ah." Chrom steps in fully, closes the door behind him. "I didn't think you'd still be awake."

"So you decided to sneak into my rooms." Robin nods. "Yes, I completely understand where you thought you were going with this plan."

Chrom winces. "Well when you put it like that…"

Robin laughs quietly. "Come on, out with it. Did you need something?"

"I just…" He shifts nervously. "I had planned to come make sure you were doing all right."

"You mean you were going to make sure I hadn't been caught in the throes of yet another nightmare."

"You make it sound so…"

"Creepy?" Robin laughs quietly. "I know you didn't mean it that way, Chrom, but really, you could just wait till morning like a normal person."

"I think we've all established I'm far from normal," Chrom says with a weak smile.

It suddenly occurs to Robin that they're very far apart, perhaps the farthest they've stood apart since they had to start sharing a tent. It feels… wrong, in a way.

"I will confess," Chrom says, breaking the silence, "I did have a… slightly more selfish reason for coming."

"Did you now?" Robin asks. His mouth has gone a little dry. He swallows.

Chrom neglects to answer verbally, and instead crosses the room, strides around the desk, tilts Robin's chin up, and kisses him soundly.

It's a heady, dizzy thing, and it leaves Robin breathless, but he has to push him away. "Not here."

"Perfect," Chrom breathes back. "I know a much better place."

That's not *exactly* what Robin meant, but he's willing to play along. Chrom takes his hand, warm and soft and dry, and leads him from the room. Robin is too caught up to protest.

They wind through the hallways of the castle, hand in hand, and Robin is glad most people are still too tired from the journey to stay up late. They slip into Chrom's personal chambers and the door thuds behind them. Robin doesn't *think* Chrom means to trip him, but somehow it happens and they end up sprawled across the bed and Chrom oh so inconspicuously ends up on top.

The excitement and light jostling has Robin half hard in his pants already, and the look Chrom is giving him now certainly doesn't help. Chrom is hovering over him on all fours, eyes intense, and he whispers, "Do you trust me?"

"Always," Robin whispers back.

Chrom swallows hard. “Then I, uh. I have something else we could try.”

Robin has a sneaking suspicion he knows what it is. “So let’s try it.”

Chrom disappears for a moment, digging through the nightstand while Robin quickly throws off his shirt and pants. When Chrom comes back with a small bottle in hand, though, he freezes.

“Now I don’t want this to seem like I’m backing out,” he says slowly, “but what the hell is that?”

Chrom’s face goes a bright red. “It’s supposed to, uh. Make things easier. Ah. Make them move easier, I suppose. I, uh. I stole it from Lissa’s stores.”

Robin can feel his own face heating up. “Why does she even have something like that?”

“Please don’t ask me about my sister right now,” Chrom pleads, and Robin laughs nervously.

A pause.

“Right, so, uh.” Robin shifts. “Are we doing this?”

Chrom lets out a deep breath. “Yes.”

Neither of them moves.

Finally, Robin rolls his eyes and drags Chrom down for a long, open mouthed kiss. He tangles his fingers in the exalt’s hair, drags his tongue along the backs of Chrom’s teeth, pulls him so close he swears he can feel his heartbeat. When he lets him go, Chrom’s lips are red and wet, and he swallows hard.

“How ‘bout now?” Robin asks quietly.

“Yes,” Chrom says again, but this time more sure. “Definitely.”

While Chrom strips, Robin shoves his underclothes off and away, tossing them to the floor to join the rest of their things. Chrom settles between Robin’s legs and quickly works the stopper out of Lissa’s bottle. He dips a single finger inside and then glances up, meeting Robin’s eyes. “You’re sure?”

“Gods, Chrom, yes,” Robin groans. “I thought that kiss had made it clear but if not we can always have a repeat performance and you can keep putting this off.”

Chrom goes bright red once more and looks back down. “I’ll just… get on with it, then.”

Robin shivers as Chrom spreads him open and runs that single cold finger to his entrance. For a moment, neither moves, and then slowly Chrom presses inside.

Robin grunts at the intrusion but doesn’t protest – it’s not *bad* , exactly, just different. Slowly, Chrom works him open, then pulls out, dips a second finger into the bottle, and presses both back inside.

It seems like years that they stay there, Chrom slowly pressing in and out and around, eventually adding a third finger, and Robin can’t help the little groan that slides out of him at the feeling. Chrom presses experimentally, and hot light shoots in Robin’s stomach and he moans before he can stop himself.

“Well,” Chrom says cheerfully. “That did something.”

“Mmhm,” Robin says through the hands he has pressed over his mouth. His voice has shot up about an octave.

“I think you’re ready,” Chrom says then, but he doesn’t move his fingers. “Are you ready?”

Robin pulls his hands from his mouth. He needs to stop doing that, it makes it very hard to make fun of Chrom when he’s being ridiculous. “Didn’t you just say I was?”

“I mean… You know what I mean!”

Robin laughs and tries not to think about the absurdity of the whole situation. “Let’s do it,” he says.

Slowly, Chrom slips his fingers out and spreads the contents of the bottle over himself. He caps it again before setting it on the floor next to them, and takes his time lining up. He’s taking long, slow breaths, Robin can tell, trying to calm himself, and Robin reaches out for his hand, tangles their fingers together.

“I trust you,” he says again and Chrom smiles without looking up, then releases Robin’s hand and slowly pushes inside.

It feels indescribable – it’s like nothing he’s ever experienced before. For a moment it’s tight and rough and wrong, and then Chrom’s deep inside and they’re both gasping a little and Chrom’s arms are shaking where he has them pressed to the bed on either side of Robin’s waist.

“You okay?” Chrom asks a little breathlessly. Robin nods frantically.

“I’m gonna—” Chrom cuts himself off as he pulls out slowly, and they both groan a little, and then he’s pushing back in and everything narrows down to this moment and this time and Robin closes his eyes so he won’t lose himself immediately.

The rhythm they set is slow at first, almost tortuously so, but slowly Chrom picks up the speed, pressing harder and faster, and Robin moves with him, holds tight to his shoulders and locks his legs around his back. Robin feels like he’s burning with the sensation that’s building inside him – he almost thinks he won’t need any extra help.

Chrom, certainly, is doing fine for himself, moaning lightly with every inward press. Robin pulls him close for a kiss, and the change in angle does *something* and Chrom’s pressing in on him and Robin moans against his mouth as a rushing wave of feeling rolls over him. Chrom pulls away from his mouth and drives in again, harder, and Robin’s moan is louder, and again, and again—

“Oh, shit,” Chrom whispers, and Robin can tell he’s close, can feel his own orgasm waiting not far behind, and he reaches down to take himself in hand at the same time that he tangles his fingers back through Chrom’s hair.

“Come on,” he whispers, timing his strokes with Chrom’s pushes, and Chrom groans, drops to his elbows and pushes once more time, rough, and his whole body shakes as he comes.

Robin follows right after, his voice louder than intended, and in the aftermath he lies there as Chrom slips out of him with only the slightest movement.

They don’t speak for what feels like hours, both trying to catch their breath. Chrom is still shaking and Robin rubs up and down his side with his clean hand.

The shaking doesn’t stop though, and Robin starts to worry. He touches Chrom’s face, hidden from him, feels wet warmth, and whispers, “Oh my god, are you crying?”

“No,” Chrom denies, but his voice cracks and he drops his forehead to Robin’s chest.

Robin doesn’t know how to respond to this. He stares up at the ceiling over Chrom’s expansive bed and wonders how the hell he ended up here. He can feel tears dripping onto his skin. “Um. Tell me what’s wrong?”

“Nothing.”

“Right,” Robin says slowly. “You’re crying after sex because everything is just so great.”

“Well…”

“Oh gods,” Robin realizes. “You are the sappiest person on the planet. This is impossible.”

Chrom lifts his head, eyes red and frowning, but at least he’s stopped crying. “You’re making fun of me.”

“Yes, it must be completely unfamiliar to you,” Robin says knowingly with a nod. “I’ve never made fun of you before, ever, as long as I’ve known you.”

Chrom drops his head again, mumbles something Robin can’t quite catch. “What was that?”

“I said,” Chrom says without moving, “I love you.”

Robin feels like his chest might burst. “I love you, too,” he says, and it has never been more true than it is now.

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There are no nightmares that night. He doesn’t know if he’s too tired or if Chrom’s presence is just so calming that they can’t come back. There will be other nights, he knows, but even just one is enough. Later, he will wonder if that was Chrom’s intention all along.

When he wakes in the morning he knows he should get up, get dressed, make the walk of shame back to his own rooms, but the sun spills in around the edges of Chrom’s curtains, casts light across Chrom’s sleeping face, his dark hair, and all Robin can do is reach out and run his hands through that hair.

“I love you,” he whispers, like a promise, and Chrom smiles in his sleep.

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